

Mayor's Column for the March 4, 2009 Review

Last week I participated in the American Public Power Association (APPA) Legislative Rally in Washington, D.C. Over fifty Wisconsin representatives from the Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin (MEUW) and WPPI Energy, including 18 mayors and village presidents, met with Wisconsin Congressional members about national issues of interest to municipally-owned electric utilities.

Rally activities included an issues briefing, participation as voting delegates at the APPA Legislative and Resolutions Committee meeting, discussions with Senator Feingold, Senator Kohl and Representative Tammy Baldwin (each representative was visited by the constituents in their districts), a debriefing to discuss and understand the legislators' positions on issues, and a dinner to network with others in our group.

Two issues of special importance were discussed with our legislators. The control of carbon emissions through a federal "cap and trade" program is supported by APPA and the Wisconsin contingent but the details of likely "cap and trade" legislation matter greatly. The concept is to place an upper limit or "cap" on carbon emissions and create a method for transfer of allowances through allocation or sale to entities exceeding the cap by organizations staying below the cap. Our state generates two-thirds of its electricity using coal and Wisconsin organizations will most certainly need to obtain allowances because of exceeding the cap. Transfer of allowances through auction could cause great price fluctuations that are not compatible with rate-setting procedures required of utilities. Our delegation encouraged legislation that applies to all industry sectors, takes into account regional differences that can impact fairness, encompasses the unique pricing aspects of utilities, and recognizes the importance of a diverse mix of generation sources.

The second highlighted item of discussion was planning for expansion of the electrical transmission "grid". On the first day of the Legislative Rally, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada caused much consternation when he stated that he would promote federal siting authority for transmission facilities. Substantial new interstate transmission facilities are necessary but careful solutions must be planned to address proportionate allocation of costs based on the benefits received. APPA, MEUW and WPPI Energy believe that regional collaboration is necessary to ensure that we build what we need when we need it and that we do not overbuild. The "Upper Midwest Transmission Development Initiative", including Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, is underway to explore these transmission issues.

There were several other public power issues mentioned in the legislator meetings, including: support for railroad antitrust enforcement and increased railroad competition legislation to ensure reliable transportation and reasonable rates for all rail customers (Representative Baldwin is sponsor of H.R. 233 and Senator Kohl is sponsor of S. 146, the Railroad Antitrust Enforcement Act of 2009); opposition to any federal legislation that would restrict the ability of public power utilities to provide advanced communication services like high bandwidth broadband services; and encouragement of passage of bulk power cyber security legislation that is crafted to enact measures and

allocate costs that are commensurate to risk (Evansville security requirements are not the same as those of New York City).

During our debriefing meeting, we learned that one Congressman from our state, while meeting with delegation members from his district, vigorously pronounced that there is no global warming. While I personally disagree with him, there are two compelling reasons to move forward with energy measures even if one is skeptical of climate change. The reasons are energy independence and a cleaner environment.

It was only a short time ago that Europe squirmed when Russia temporarily shut off the fuel spigot in the region. As a nation we must remember the oil embargo of the 1970s. Diversity of energy resources is imperative for our security. We must get to work on energy independence, i.e. the combination of energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy.

At a minimum, the surge of asthma, emphysema and other related health issues are exacerbated by our dirty environment. During the time I lived in the Milwaukee area I experienced a number of “ozone action days” during hot, muggy, stagnant summer weather. The alerts typically stretched along Lake Michigan from Indiana, through Chicago, to north of Milwaukee. I have noticed that we have had air quality alerts in this area during the past two winters. It is time to “clean up our act”.

It was an exciting week to be in the nation’s capital; the air was electric (pun?). Walking near the White House on Monday afternoon, security was extremely tight as the Fiscal Responsibility Summit was underway. As I walked to the Rayburn House Office Building on Tuesday afternoon to meet with Congresswoman Baldwin, a parade of police vehicles, including K-9 details, and public works trucks loaded with barricades pulled up in front of the Capitol to begin securing the area for President Obama’s speech before the Joint Session of Congress. On Thursday, the \$3.6 trillion budget was released. The Washington news media was frenzied.

I had a companion I carried with me during the Rally. To David B. of Mrs. Wade’s class, just before Senator Kohl left our meeting to vote on a matter at the Capitol he autographed Flat Stanley’s back. Once I gather all the photos of the trip I will send Flat Stanley back to you. He has been a fun companion!

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS

LED street lights are being tested at four locations in Evansville. They can be found on Franklin Street, Sherman Court, Garfield Avenue at Fifth Street and Garfield Avenue at Joshua Drive. Very preliminary metering indicates they use about half of the electricity of the old street lights. We are seeking comments from the public on the energy-efficient lights. You can contact the Water and Light Department at 882-2288 or me at 882-2266.

The second meeting of the Evansville Energy Independence Team was held on March 3. The data collection template to be used for calculating the city’s current energy usage has

been received. An energy audit will be completed by John Rasmussen of Evansville Water and Light, with information subsequently entered into the template. A list of possible energy independence projects was developed for future discussion.

The S.O.L.E. Committee is undertaking a fundraising drive to make additional improvements to Lake Leota, including development of a wetland habitat on the west side of the lake and a fish stocking program. Donations can be mailed to S.O.L.E., P. O. Box 265, Evansville, WI 53536. My husband, John, and I sent our contribution last week.

The Marrow Registry Drive will be held from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday, March 9, at the Masonic Temple.

The Evansville Community Partnership Chili Cook-off will occur on Saturday, March 7, at the Grove Campus, 320 Fair Street, from 5-8 p.m.

The next meeting of the Evansville Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club will be held on Wednesday, March 11, at 6:30 p.m. in the Eager Economy Building. A representative from SCORE Counselors to America's Small Business will speak on assistance and expertise that is available to new and existing small businesses. General information on SCORE can be found at www.score.org.

Please remember to clean up after your pets. Your friends, neighbors, park visitors, and downtown business proprietors appreciate your efforts.

COMMUNITY THANKS

Evansville thanks the Lions Club, Boy Scouts, FFA and FFA Alumni for their collaboration on last weekend's Farm Toy Show and Pancake Breakfast. The four organizations are solid, active, long-time groups that add to the vitality of our community.